



**MISSISSIPPI ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT
PROGRAM (MAAP)
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS WRITING RUBRIC
INTERPRETIVE GUIDE
Grade 7 Example**

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**Mississippi Academic Assessment Program
English Language Arts Writing Rubric Interpretive Guide**

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1.0 Application of the Rubric in the Classroom

1.1 Purpose of the Rubric

The MAAP Rubric is used to score multiple genres of writing across multiple grade levels. The description of each score point under each component is not detailed and grade specific because the rubric itself is generic in its usage. The rubric will be used to score opinion and argumentative writing, informative writing, and narrative writing of students in grades 3-8 and English II.

1.2 Scoring with the Rubric

When using the rubric to score student writing in the classroom, it is imperative to refer back to the requirements of the grade level Writing Standards 1-3 and Language Standards 1-3 as these dictate what is required by students when they write. The rubric is then used to evaluate how well the students meet these requirements. For example, when writing an argumentative essay, Writing Standard 1 requires students to use evidence from the text to support a claim. The rubric is used to determine how well a student uses evidence from the text to determine the claim (Development of Ideas component).

To use the rubric effectively, understand that each score point under each component has multiple parts. A student may, for example, “demonstrate evidence of planning and a purposeful, logical progression of ideas,” which falls under score point 4 in Writing Organization, but only constructs a “basic introduction and conclusion,” which falls under score point 3 in Writing Organization. The rubric is a holistic rubric; the scorer must determine in which score point the student response best fits overall.

A student response will receive four scores: a score for Development of Ideas, a score for Writing Organization, a score for Language Conventions of Grammar and Usage, and a score for Language Conventions of Mechanics.

1.3 Annotated Scored Writing Samples

The following pages contain an example of a Grade 7 text and a writing prompt. Immediately following the text and prompt are six example student responses. Each response has been scored using the MAAP Writing Rubric. Following the scores is a description of the rationale for the student’s score for each component.

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Grade 7 Sample Text and Prompt

DIRECTIONS: Read the passage and answer the prompt that follows.

Excerpt from *The Call of the Wild*

by Jack London

1 Buck did not read the newspapers, or he would have known that trouble was brewing, not alone for himself, but for every tide-water dog, strong of muscle and with warm, long hair, from Puget Sound to San Diego. Because men, groping in the Arctic darkness, had found a yellow metal, and because steamship and transportation companies were booming the find, thousands of men were rushing into the Northland. These men wanted dogs, and the dogs they wanted were heavy dogs, with strong muscles by which to toil, and furry coats to protect them from the frost.

2 Buck lived at a big house in the sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley. Judge Miller's place, it was called. It stood back from the road, half hidden among the trees, through which glimpses could be caught of the wide cool veranda that ran around its four sides. The house was approached by gravelled driveways which wound about through wide-spreading lawns and under the interlacing boughs of tall poplars. At the rear things were on even a more spacious scale than at the front. There were great stables, where a dozen grooms and boys held forth, rows of vine-clad servants' cottages, an endless and orderly array of outhouses, long grape arbors, green pastures, orchards, and berry patches. Then there was the pumping plant for the artesian well, and the big cement tank where Judge Miller's boys took their morning plunge and kept cool in the hot afternoon.

3 And over this great demesne Buck ruled. Here he was born, and here he had lived the four years of his life. It was true, there were other dogs. There could not but be other dogs on so vast a place, but they did not count. They came and went, resided in the populous kennels, or lived obscurely in the recesses of the house after the fashion of Toots, the Japanese pug, or Ysabel, the Mexican hairless,—strange creatures that rarely put nose out of doors or set foot to ground. On the other hand, there were the fox terriers, a score of them at least, who yelped fearful promises at Toots and Ysabel looking out of the windows at them and protected by a legion of housemaids armed with brooms and mops.

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4 But Buck was neither house-dog nor kennel-dog. The whole realm was his. He plunged into the swimming tank or went hunting with the Judge's sons; he escorted Mollie and Alice, the Judge's daughters, on long twilight or early morning rambles; on wintry nights he lay at the Judge's feet before the roaring library fire; he carried the Judge's grandsons on his back, or rolled them in the grass, and guarded their footsteps through wild adventures down to the fountain in the stable yard, and even beyond, where the paddocks were, and the berry patches. Among the terriers he stalked imperiously, and Toots and Ysabel he utterly ignored, for he was king,—king over all creeping, crawling, flying things of Judge Miller's place, humans included.

5 His father, Elmo, a huge St. Bernard, had been the Judge's inseparable companion, and Buck bid fair to follow in the way of his father. He was not so large,—he weighed only one hundred and forty pounds,—for his mother, Shep, had been a Scotch shepherd dog. Nevertheless, one hundred and forty pounds, to which was added the dignity that comes of good living and universal respect, enabled him to carry himself in right royal fashion. During the four years since his puppyhood he had lived the life of a sated aristocrat; he had a fine pride in himself, was even a trifle egotistical, as country gentlemen sometimes become because of their insular situation. But he had saved himself by not becoming a mere pampered house-dog. Hunting and kindred outdoor delights had kept down the fat and hardened his muscles; and to him, as to the cold-tubbing races, the love of water had been a tonic and a health preserver.

6 And this was the manner of dog Buck was in the fall of 1897, when the Klondike strike dragged men from all the world into the frozen North. But Buck did not read the newspapers, and he did not know that Manuel, one of the gardener's helpers, was an undesirable acquaintance. Manuel had one besetting sin. He loved to play Chinese lottery. Also, in his gambling, he had one besetting weakness—faith in a system; and this made his damnation certain. For to play a system requires money, while the wages of a gardener's helper do not lap over the needs of a wife and numerous progeny.

7 The Judge was at a meeting of the Raisin Growers' Association, and the boys were busy organizing an athletic club, on the memorable night of Manuel's treachery. No one saw him and Buck go off through the orchard on what Buck imagined was merely a stroll. And with the exception of a solitary man, no one saw them arrive at the little flag station known as College Park. This man talked with Manuel, and money chinked between them.

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8 "You might wrap up the goods before you deliver 'm," the stranger said gruffly, and Manuel doubled a piece of stout rope around Buck's neck under the collar.

9 "Twist it, an' you'll choke 'm plentee," said Manuel, and the stranger grunted a ready affirmative.

10 Buck had accepted the rope with quiet dignity.

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Writing Prompt

You have read an excerpt from *The Call of the Wild*. Write an essay that analyzes how the author uses Buck's character traits to develop a theme. Use key details and examples from the passage to support your ideas.

Your writing will be scored on the development of ideas, organization of writing, and language conventions of grammar, usage, and mechanics.

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RESPONSE 1

In *The Call of the Wild*, the author explains Buck's character traits in order to develop the theme of pride being dangerous. Throughout the excerpt, the reader learns about Buck through the narrator's focus on him and his mindset. Because of this, the reader can infer that Buck is a proud animal and views himself as a powerful animal. These two traits inhibit Buck from realizing what is happening to him when he is being sold by Manuel.

Through the narrator's description of Buck, the readers learn that Buck is a prideful animal. In paragraph 4, the narrator shows how Buck acts around the other animals by stating that "he utterly ignored" both of the inside dogs. The narrator also describes him as having a lot of pride in himself. He knows where the other animals live on the farm and what they do, but he does not concern himself with their lives. While this pride may seem harmless, it proved to be a downfall when Manuel, the gardener, decided to sell him. Buck likely felt that he was too good to be sold since he viewed himself as above the other animals and too important to be mistreated.

The author also describes Buck as a dog who views himself as powerful in the sense of a leadership and social position. The narrator references that Buck's father was the owner's favorite companion and that Buck was following in his footsteps. In paragraph 4, Buck is described as being the King over everything, even the humans. This power quickly fades when, in paragraph 7, no one is there to save him from Manuel's thievery, and he is powerless to save himself, primarily because his pride does not let him see what is really happening to him. This pride and sense of power ultimately led to his demise.

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RESPONSE 1 SCORING

Development of Ideas

Score Point 4

The student shows a complete understanding of the task, stating that “the author explains Buck’s character traits in order to develop the theme of pride being dangerous” and making the claim that certain traits “inhibit Buck from realizing what is happening to him when he is being sold by Manuel.” The student provides some reasoning and evidence to support the claim, and this reasoning and evidence is relevant and accurate (e.g., “...Buck is described as being the king over everything, even the humans.”). The student also includes analysis of the text to support the claim (e.g., “Buck likely felt that he was too good to be sold since he viewed himself as above the other animals and too important to be mistreated.”).

Writing Organization

Score Point 3

The student shows evidence of planning with a logical progression of ideas. The response is easy to follow, beginning with the introduction and an answer to the prompt, followed by support of the claim using evidence of from the text. Furthermore, the student uses transitions effectively to clarify the relationships among claims, reasons, and evidence (e.g., “Because of this, the reader can infer....” and “While this pride may seem harmless....”). However, the student earns a 3 for Writing Organization because the response lacks a cohesive concluding section. Although the student includes a conclusion in the response, the concluding section should connect the relevant examples to the theme of the dangerous nature of pride.

Language Conventions of Grammar and Usage

Score Point 2

The student’s response maintains an elevated, professional tone, which is effective and appropriate for the task. Moreover, the sentence structure is varied as the student uses a variety of simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences throughout the piece of writing. Word choice is also appropriate, effective, and purposeful (e.g., “inhibit,” “social position,” “thievery”).

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Language Conventions of Mechanics

Score Point 2

The student's response demonstrates consistent use of proper punctuation, capitalization, and spelling with very few errors, none of which interfere with the meaning of the response (e.g., "Alot" is used as one word in paragraph 2, and "King" is unnecessarily capitalized in paragraph 3).

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RESPONSE 2

In “The Call of the Wild”, Buck’s character traits prevented him from realizing what was really happening to him in the story.

Buck’s pridefulness inhibited him from realizing what was happening. The text states in paragraph five that he was full of pride in himself and that he acted like an aristocrat. He thought too greatly of himself and that failed to let him see the events as they unfolded. Buck thought of himself as a powerful dog, who couldn’t be sold since he was the leader and the king. The pride may appear as a harmless trait, but it was actually Buck’s downfall because of what Manuel, the gardener, did to him in the end.

In the end, Buck’s character traits of pride and his sense of power is what led him to his demise. They also helped developed the theme of the story where the reader can see that pride can be the cause of dangerous situations.

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RESPONSE 2 SCORING

Development of Ideas

Score Point 3

The student’s response is clear and focused on the task (e.g. “In ‘The Call of the Wild,’ Bucks character traits prevented him from realizing what was really happening to him in the story.”). The student could have used more varied textual evidence to support the claim, but the evidence provided in the second paragraph is relevant and appropriate. The student explains how the evidence relates clearly to the theme being developed.

Writing Organization

Score Point 2

The student includes a short and weak introduction. The introduction needs to be further developed to include an explanation of both the theme and claim. Transitions are limited when moving from one paragraph to the next, as well as between ideas presented as evidence in the second paragraph (e.g., “In the end....”). However, the student includes a well-developed conclusion, tying the character’s traits back to the theme of the passage.

Language Conventions of Grammar and Usage

Score Point 2

The student’s response is well-written using an appropriate tone and a variety of sentence structures, including compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences. Furthermore, there are no major usage or grammatical errors that impede understanding.

Language Conventions of Mechanics

Score Point 2

With the exception of an omitted possessive apostrophe in the first sentence, the student’s response does not include any major mechanical issues that would impair a reader’s understanding.

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RESPONSE 3

Buck is a good dog in Jack London's story *The Call of the Wild*. He is described in a positive way except that he has a particular flaw. He thinks that he is better than all the other dogs on the farm. Later on, all the good things that are said about him cause him to get stolen by some one he trust. So Jack London is showing through the dog Buck that if you think you are better than everyone else, bad things can happen to you.

Buck is described as big and powerful but not as big as his dad. The story says that he was "one hundred and forty pounds, to which was added the dignity that comes of good living and universal respect." So Buck knew he had respect. Jack London says that Buck has lots of freedom that other dogs do not when it is said that "But Buck was neither house-dog nor kennel-dog. The whole realm was his." He gets to roam free and the other hunting dogs don't. Buck sort of bullies the terriers and drives the other little dogs crazy. Buck is described as being proud of him self. "He had a fine pride in himself, was even a trifle egotistical." Buck believes all the humans are his friend because he has been treated so well all of his life and he feels like he deserves it. This is dangerous in the end.

Because he trust everyone and because he thinks he is so much above the other dogs he is misled by Manuel into the woods and is probably going to be sold to the man. He doesn't know Manuel "was an undesirable acquaintance." Manuel liked to sin. If the dog had not been so full of himself and thinking that no one would ever do him harm because he was so perfect, then he probably would have not been so trusting of that man who takes him away from home and steals him.

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RESPONSE 3 SCORING

Development of Ideas

Score Point 3

The student shows an understanding of the given task by identifying the theme of the passage and explaining how Buck’s characteristics exemplify the theme. In paragraph 1, the student says, “So Jack London is showing through the dog Buck that if you think you are better than everyone else, bad things can happen to you.” This proves the student’s understanding that the author uses the character to explain the theme. The student uses sufficient and appropriate details from the text to explain the pride that Buck feels, which ultimately leads to his downfall. (e.g. “He had a fine pride in himself, was even a trifle egotistical.”) Although more pertinent evidence could have been provided, the examples provided are adequate.

Writing Organization

Score Point 2

The student includes a basic, yet clear introduction but does not include a clear concluding section. While the student explains how Buck’s pride led to his being taken, the student fails to connect these details to the theme that feelings of superiority can lead to potential danger. In paragraph 3, the student analyzes how Buck’s arrogance led to his being kidnapped, but not how arrogance can lead to one’s downfall. The student attempts to use transitions but does not use them effectively (e.g., “But,” “So,” and “Later on” are used to show a series of events taking place in the story, but transitions are not used to connect these events to any particular theme.). Therefore, lack of transitions fail to show connectivity between evidence and the claim.

Language Conventions of Grammar and Usage

Score Point 1

The student’s response contains errors in subject-verb agreement and incorrect word choice, which can impede the reader’s comprehension of the response (e.g., The words “accept” instead of “except” and “then” instead of “than” in paragraph 1 are examples of such errors.). The tone is impacted by the often casual, conversational phrasing (e.g, “Buck sort of bullies the terriers....”). However, the errors are not so egregious that the reader cannot read and understand the response.

Language Conventions of Mechanics

Score Point 2

The response has few, if any, errors in punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

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RESPONSE 4

Buck thought he was a awesome dog. He thought he was better then all other dogs and the author tells us this when he says, "There could not but be other dogs on so vast a place, but they did not count." The author tells us how Buck just thought he was perfect and nothing could ever happen to him because "the hole realm was his"

But Buck wasn't perfect because Buck couldn't read so Buck didn't know that some stuff was going on. Namely the Gold Rush. And the Gold Rush need dogs like Buck. While Buck was sitting there "at the judge's feet before the roaring library fire;" thinking nothing could happen to him, he got took by the gardner.

Buck think he is better then other dogs and then he got took because he thought that. Now he was in the Gold rush. He should have been thinking he wasn't as good then he would not have maybe have got took.

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RESPONSE 4 SCORING

Development of Ideas

Score Point 2

The student shows a partial understanding of the task. The student does not explicitly state a theme but does infer a theme of excessive pride as a downfall. The student provides evidence from the text to support the idea that Buck thought he was better than other dogs and that he did not know about the Gold Rush. The student uses some reasoning to develop the response, but because the claim in the response is inferred, it is sometimes difficult to make the connection between the two.

Writing Organization

Score Point 2

The student's response demonstrates evidence of planning with some logical progression of ideas; however, the response is formulaic in structure. Words, clauses, and transitions are used but are simplistic in nature (e.g., "But," "And," "Now"). The response includes an introduction and conclusion that contribute to the cohesiveness of the essay but are formulaic in structure.

Language Conventions of Grammar and Usage

Score Point 1

The tone of the response is very informal (e.g., The use of contractions and phrasing such as "some stuff was going on" illustrates an informal tone.), and the awkward structure of some sentences makes it difficult to read. The repetition of the word "Buck" in the first sentence of paragraph 2 is distracting to the reader, and major errors such as run-on sentences, sentence fragments, subject-verb disagreement, and verb usage errors make the response difficult to comprehend.

Language Conventions of Mechanics

Score Point 2

The response contains a few spelling errors, but they do not impede the overall understanding of the response.

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RESPONSE 5

This is what I think about the character traits of Buck from “The Call of the Wild”.

Buck was a smart dog because he did not read the newspapers. If he had read the newspapers he would have know that trouble was brewing for him. Buck acted like he was the only dog in the world. I know this because it said that Buck was neither a house dog or a kennel dog. Buck took things that he didn’t really want – like the rope and that showed that Buck was willing.

This is what I think abot Bucks character and his traits.

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RESPONSE 5 SCORING

Development of Ideas

Score Point 1

The student focuses on character traits of Buck; however, the student does not understand the task as no theme is referenced in the response. The response includes details about Buck’s character (e.g., “Buck was a smart dog...”), but this evidence is not tied to a theme.

Writing Organization

Score Point 1

The student makes an attempt at planning by including introductory and conclusion sentences, but the sentences are not developed as introductions and conclusions and are merely “I think” statements on the student’s part. The student attempts to support his or her claim in the main paragraph, but it is not developed nor connected using appropriate transitions to introduce claims and evidence.

Language Conventions of Grammar and Usage

Score Point 2

Although there is one run-on sentence and a verb error (e.g., “have know”), these mistakes do not impede understanding. Moreover, the student response contains no significant issue with tone and has a variety of sentence structures.

Language Conventions

Score Point 2

The student response contains only one spelling error, but overall there are no errors that impeded understanding.

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RESPONSE 6

It's a good thing that I have stayed in such good shape. Then the mean gardener stole me from my nice, warm home with the Judge, he took me to the great white north. In the north I was made to drag sleds with men and supplies all over the place through the snow and cold and ice and I was not treated like I was when I lived with the judge. But like I said, I stayed in good shape.

When I am in the north, I have to stay strong because I am always pulling the sled. Remember when I lived with the judge I was hunting with the judge's sons and I carried the grandson on my back this made me strong and kept me in good shape to pull the sled. Always playing with the kids helped me teach me patience. This is important in the north because I need to wait patiently when the men are looking for the yellow metal.

All day long I pull the sled or I wait. I do not like it like I liked living with the judge, but it's not so bad because I am in very good shape from hunting and carrying the grandsons and swimming.

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RESPONSE 6 SCORING

Development of Ideas

Score Point 0

The writing shows no understanding of the given task. The student does not answer the prompt. While the student writes a narrative, he or she does not answer the prompt at all. The writing does not receive a coded “No Score” because the writing discusses the characters and setting from the passage, which is considered evidence from the text (i.e., “...hunting with the judge’s sons and I carried the grandson on my back...”). However, because this is supporting writing that is not answering the prompt, it is irrelevant.

Writing Organization

Score Point 1

The writing shows evidence of planning and a progression of ideas, but the mode of writing is incorrect for the task. The task requires informative writing, and the student produces narrative writing. However, the student shows a progression of ideas (e.g., Sequencing and describing the thought process of the character illustrate this type of progression.), which shows evidence of planning.

Language Conventions of Grammar and Usage

Score Point 0

The tone of the writing is inappropriate for the task, purpose, and audience. The task required informative writing; the writing was narrative. The sentence structure was inconsistent with many run-ons that made the writing difficult to read.

Language Conventions of Mechanics

Score Point 2

Although “Judge” is inconsistently capitalized, the rest of the writing demonstrates consistent command of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. There may be a few errors in mechanics, but they do not interfere with meaning. Errors that make for difficulty in reading occur in grammar and usage

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Appendix A: English Language Arts Writing Rubric

Performance Range		Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Minimal	
		12	11-9	8-5	4-1	0

Standard ID	Standard	Score of				
		4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points
W.1-3	Development of Ideas	The writing is clear, consistently focused, and shows a complete understanding of the given task. Ideas are fully developed by using logical and convincing reasoning, well-chosen evidence from the text, and details that are specific, relevant, and accurate based upon the text.	The writing is generally clear and focused, and shows a general understanding of the given task. Ideas are adequately developed by using logical reasoning, sufficient and appropriate evidence from the text, and descriptions and details that are, for the most part, relevant and accurate based upon the text.	The writing is vague and shows only partial understanding of the given task. Ideas are somewhat developed by using some reasoning and some evidence from the text and descriptions and details that may be irrelevant, may be merely listed, and may or may not be found in the text.	The writing is unclear, and shows a lack of understanding of the given task. Ideas are developed with limited reasoning, little to no evidence from the text, and descriptions and details that are irrelevant and/or inaccurate.	The writing is unclear, shows no understanding of the given task, and uses no reasoning with little to no evidence from the text and descriptions and details that are irrelevant and/or inaccurate.

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Standard ID	Standard	Score of				
		4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points
W.1-3	Writing Organization	The writing demonstrates evidence of planning and a purposeful, logical progression of ideas that allows the reader to easily follow the writer’s ideas. Words, clauses, and transitions are used frequently and effectively to clarify the relationships among claims, reasons, details, and/or evidence. The writing contains an effective introduction and conclusion that contribute to cohesiveness and clarity of the response.	The writing demonstrates evidence of planning and a progression of ideas that allows the reader to follow the writer’s ideas. Words, clauses, and transitions are used effectively to clarify the relationships among claims, reasons, details, and/or evidence. The writing contains an introduction and conclusion that contribute to the cohesiveness of the response.	The writing demonstrates evidence of planning with some logical progression of ideas that allows the reader to follow the writer’s ideas. Words, clauses, and transitions are used somewhat consistently to clarify the relationships among claims, reasons, details, and/or evidence. The writing contains a basic introduction and conclusion that contribute to cohesiveness that may be formulaic in structure.	The writing shows an attempt at planning, but the progression of ideas is not always logical, making it more difficult for the reader to follow the writer’s message or ideas. Words, clauses, and transitions are used sparingly and sometimes ineffectively to clarify the relationships among claims, reasons, details, and/or evidence. The writing contains an introduction and conclusion that are inappropriate and/or disconnected, resulting in a lack of cohesiveness and clarity.	The writing lacks evidence of planning (random order) or a progression of ideas, making it difficult for the reader to follow the writer’s message or ideas. Words, clauses, and transitions are lacking or used ineffectively to clarify the relationships among claims, reasons, details, and/or evidence. There is a lack of an introduction and/or conclusion resulting in a lack of cohesiveness and clarity.

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Standard ID	Standard	Score of				
		4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points
L.1 and .3	Language Conventions of Grammar and Usage			The writing establishes and maintains tone appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. Word choice is precise, effective, and purposeful. Sentences are fluent and varied in length and structure. <i>The writing may contain a few minor errors in grammar and usage, but they do not interfere with meaning.</i>	The writing maintains a tone inappropriate to task, purpose, and/or audience. Word choice is limited, clichéd, and repetitive. Sentences show little or no variety in length and structure, and some may be awkward leading to a monotonous reading. <i>The writing may contain a pattern of errors in grammar and usage that occasionally impedes meaning.</i>	The writing fails to maintain tone appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. Words are functional and simple and/or may be inappropriate to the task. The sentences may contain errors in construction or are simple and lack variety, making the essay difficult to read. <i>The writing may contain egregious errors in grammar and usage that impede meaning.</i>
L.2	Language Conventions of Mechanics			The writing demonstrates a consistent command of the conventions of standard English (punctuation, capitalization, spelling). The writing may contain a few minor errors in <i>mechanics</i> but they do not interfere with meaning.	The writing demonstrates an inconsistent command of the conventions of standard English (punctuation, capitalization, spelling). The writing may contain a pattern of errors in <i>mechanics</i> that occasionally impedes meaning.	The writing demonstrates very limited command of the conventions of standard English (punctuation, capitalization, spelling). The writing may contain egregious errors in <i>mechanics</i> that impede meaning.